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Time, Consumption and the coordination of everyday life

Dale Southerton

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Chapter 1. Introducing Time, Temporality and Societal Change

1.1. Introduction

Lewis Carroll's white rabbit from *Alice in Wonderland* – the white rabbit who frantically dashes around holding a clock claiming “*I'm late, I'm late, for a very important date*” – conjures the image of being a slave to time, of time being something against which actions in daily life are measured and judged. The ‘white rabbit’ has come to symbolically represent dominant interpretations of time in contemporary societies because it captures the common perception that the pace of daily life is accelerating and that there is an increasing shortage of time. Time famine, the time squeeze, the harried leisure class, the search for quality time, are popular topics of public discussion and of more and less popular social science books (e.g. Colvile 2016; Demos, 1995; Gleick, 1999; Hewitt, 1993; Linder, 1970; Schor, 1992; Schulte, 2015). The time squeeze has become a contemporary malady for which a range of prescriptions have been spawned which promise to help alleviate its effects. Examples include: time management books, websites and consultants; gadgets of various descriptions including labour saving technologies, traffic warning devices that allow you to find a quicker route to your destination, and the replacement of ‘snail mail’ by email; a range of services have emerged that offer convenience, whether that relates to the delivery of groceries or assistance with the selection of gifts for one’s partner or children. In response, various social movements and ethical concerns have emerged that espouse the slowing down of daily life (e.g. the Slow Food Movement), mindfulness and the ‘downshifting’ of lifestyles, while governments and firms seek to offer their employees flexible working arrangements in order to facilitate work-life balance policies.

The reasons for concern are multiple and profound. The time squeeze is held either directly or indirectly responsible for a wide range of contemporary social problems. Families are torn asunder because couples do not have the time available to spend with one another, while parents struggle to spend meaningful time with their children. Busy lifestyles are forever being cited as a principle reason for the breakdown of intimate relationships, and it is commonly implied that children watch too much television and spend too much time playing computer games simply because their parents are too busy with work and domestic commitments to do other, presumably more virtuous, cultural activities with them. Communities also suffer. Finding time to spend with friends, for idle chat with neighbours, is often assumed to be connected in some way or other with people having a ‘lack of time’. There are simply too many competing demands on our time such that we prioritize consuming and working, rationing our time accordingly, and wider community relationships suffer most. People live in communities where they know few of their neighbours in any form other than to say a passing ‘hello’. Unsurprisingly, given the above set of associations between a time squeeze and the decline of family and community relationships, senses of well-being are undermined. The popular discourse of contemporary life as being ‘stressful’ is well established and often, at least indirectly, correlated with the rise of mental illness (Rosa, 2017). Even leisure, that segment of social life associated with rest, recuperation and pleasure, is often described as being ‘less leisurely’ as people rush to fit it into their hectic lives (Roberts, 1976).

Broader still, the time squeeze has profound implications for the organization of societies. Social capital, which refers to degrees of trust in others and the strength of social networks, are eroded as people lack time to participate in community activities and civil society, leading scholars such as Robert Putnam (2000) to complain that '*Bowling Alone*' leads to the fragmentation of public life and political disinterestedness. Indeed, in 2006 the Power Inquiry into British Democracy drew a direct correlation between the presumed decline of time spent eating together and political apathy, because people do not have the time to discuss and debate key political issues. Crudely speaking, the time squeeze further exacerbates a contemporary process of individualization whereby individuals become increasingly self-aware and compelled to make choices in contexts of weakening social rules or norms to guide or constrain their actions (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001). The perceived need to manage one's time reinforces processes of individualization and exacerbates senses of personal responsibility to manage that time effectively, intensifying our awareness and focus on time as a resource (or commodity) to be used purposefully. Concerns around climate change and environmental sustainability represent a further case where the perceived lack of time is held to be a barrier to pro-environmental lifestyle choices (Southerton, 2013). People constantly report being concerned about the environment, but also report feeling helpless in their response because they do not have the time to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle – to substitute slower transportation methods for car driving or carefully sourcing local products from markets as opposed to the one-stop trip to supermarkets.

The popular image presented in these contemporary maladies of time is a social world so tightly calibrated and filled with so many activities and commitments that critical features of social, cultural and political life have been squeezed out. Those activities have not disappeared, people still eat together, parents do spend time with their children and people still engage in community events. But, according to popular commentary, they do so more seldomly than in the past and such engagement is performed within contexts of rush and haste.

There are many competing diagnoses of the time squeeze predicament, most of which assume there to be some substantive basis for these concerns. Many try to explain why, despite it being possible for most people to have more free time and a more relaxed pace of life, people perversely opt to remain harried. Critical to such accounts is the rising significance of consumer culture, with people becoming locked-in to 'work-spend' cycles as they seek to earn the money required to fund the ever-rising expectations of a consumer lifestyle. The claim that people are working more is a vexed issue and, as will be argued, limits our understandings of socio-temporal change. The puzzle is, however, deepened by much time diary evidence. For example, Robinson and Godbey (1997) show that, paradoxically, Americans felt more rushed in 1985 than in 1965 despite having substantially more free time. Gershuny's (2000) cross-cultural analysis replicates this finding – most people spend less time in paid work than did the workers of fifty years ago.

Other accounts focus on economic restructuring and changing domestic divisions of labour. As more women enter paid employment, they find themselves juggling the roles, responsibilities and associated activities of an employee, mother, homemaker and partner. Working mothers especially experience a dual burden of juggling work and domestic life. A strong argument is presented regarding the rationalization of everyday life, with more domestic and social tasks becoming subject to the time-disciplining effects of technologies, such as washing machines and email. Accounts of the

'acceleration of everything' (Gleick, 1999) attempt to demonstrate that the pace of change creates a condition in which social, economic and cultural life is experienced as one of perpetual and ever-faster change. And, finally, there are accounts which attempt to correct against a largely negative view of time scarcity. Being busy, harried and rushed can lead to senses of achievement and offer a form of social status (Gershuny, 2005). A busy lifestyle demonstrates a 'full and valued life' to the self and to others.

These broad theoretical accounts of profound societal changes employ 'clock time' as the conceptual basis for their analyses. The precise measurement of the passage of time in seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years is a dominant feature of modern life. Societies are calibrated around clock time: trains arrive and disembark at given times; meetings are scheduled for a particular time of a particular day and, often, are allocated a particular duration; family life is organized around the specific timings of the school day, the work day, childcare and meal times; the organization of any workplace is dependent on people, goods and services arriving and leaving at designated times. Not only is clock time inescapable in modern life, our social and economic systems would, quite literally, grind to a halt without it.

This book takes the time squeeze as its substantive starting point. It distinguishes between time scarcity and time pressure to explore the extent to which contemporary everyday lives are experiences of time being squeezed. It has three principle aims. First, it provides a systematic review of social scientific theories that seek to explain the changing significance of time in social life. Second it presents empirical studies that examine socio-temporal experiences of everyday life. The term temporal is nebulous in that it refers to perceptions of social phenomena related to or of time, and thus opens up empirical analysis to consider a wide range of inter-connected dimensions through which daily activities can be analysed. Principal dimensions considered in the analysis of this book are timing, tempo, periodicity, sequence, synchronization (of activities), coordination (of participants), and durations. Finally, this book aims to advance theoretical understandings of the socio-temporal organisation of daily lives through the application of social practice theories. In doing so, it will be argued that the patterns of consumption embedded in contemporary arrangements and performances of social practices should be conceptualised as formations of socio-temporal rhythms. The implications of such an approach moves social theory beyond the dominance of clock time and towards explanations focused on the coordination and synchronization of social practices.

1.2. Thinking time

Daily life has not always been so regimented by objective (e.g. clock) measures of time. Historical archives that document the canonization process (the inquiry through which a deceased person was judged whether or not they should be made a saint), provide a rich source of data on 'time reckoning' in medieval times. In 1287, the Welshman William Cragh was hung outside the walls of Swansea, only to be revived by the Bishop of Hereford, Thomas de Cantilupe. In 1307, the now dead Bishop was to be considered for canonization, on account of his miracle revival of William Cragh. What is interesting about the archives is not whether this was actually a miracle, but the evidence provided by nine witnesses that William was indeed dead before being revived by the good Bishop. When asked for how long he hung on the gallows, the witnesses gave answers such as 'for the space of time that a

man would have gone a quarter mile at an ordinary pace'. The witnesses also found it difficult to pinpoint when the 'miracle' happened with some claiming it was fifteen years earlier, while others suggested sixteen or eighteen years previously (Bartlett, 2004).

The example of the canonization enquiry for the Bishop of Hereford is instructive for two reasons. First, and especially when juxtaposed with the representation of time evoked by Lewis Carroll's white rabbit, it vividly highlights the extent to which our everyday understandings and perceptions of time has come to be dominated by the clock. Secondly, and more importantly for present purposes, is that the example highlights there are other ways in which time in everyday social lives can be understood. In the testimonies of witnesses of William Cragh's hanging, time was presented based on subjective interpretations of shared social practices that acted as a reference point for indicating temporal features of daily lives. In these examples the practices mentioned were typical, shared, everyday experiences such as walking. As will be argued in the latter chapters of this book, examining the relationship between time and society through the theoretical lens of shared social practices offers instructive insights into the organisation and experiences of contemporary daily life.

Given that a central focus of this book is temporality (i.e. perceptions of social phenomena related to or of time), it is useful to briefly consider five different ways in which the temporal has been understood and conceptualized: (a) understanding change and measuring motion; (b) contrasting past and future dimensions of time; (c) inter-cultural comparison; (d) progression through 'life times'; (e) and as socio-temporal rhythms. While each approach connects the temporal to ways of analyzing forms of societal organization and change, it is the analysis of socio-temporal rhythms that forms the core consideration of this book.

Philosophical theories of time can be traced back to the sixth century BC, and with the concerns of Greek philosophers with understanding the relationship between persistence and change, permanence and ephemerality, mortality and immortality. Plato (c.429-347 BC) distinguished between the realms of 'form' and 'ideas'. On the one hand the form of a tree, for example, changes with the seasons – growing and dying – but the idea of the tree is 'timeless': *'[t]he idea endures, while its particular expression is perishable'* (quoted in Adam 2004: 27). The tree that lives and dies, and which is therefore temporal (changes through time), can only be known through reference to the timeless idea of a tree; *'time does not exist in its own right but is an integral part of the universe'* (ibid. 27). The work of Aristotle (384-322 BC) was, by contrast, concerned with the relationship between time and motion, and how we might measure change. Time is known through the difference between 'before and after', and without change we cannot recognize time, while without time we cannot identify change (Adam, 2004).

That time does not exist in its own right but can only be understood in relation to form and ideas was critical to Newton's scientific concern with the measurement of motion. Newton was not concerned with time per se, but with the application of time as a unit for measuring motion. For Newton, time is a quantity, measurable in length and expressible in number. An absolute and mathematical concept of time allows for the precise measurement of rates of change because it is a form of time that is independent from the transformations that it reveals. Motions may be accelerated or delayed but this has no effect on the passage of absolute time. The Newtonian concept of time has been critical in the development of Western understandings of time as an objective unit of measurement.

Understandably given Newton's concerns, this concept fails to consider subjective experiences of time. Hegel makes the point that physics cannot reveal the 'meanings' of time. Rather, he argues, that things are finite and therefore temporal. Time is not abstract to things but part of things (Adam, 2004). Like Plato's tree, things grow, wither and die, their meanings and cultural significance change over time, and they cannot, therefore, be understood as anything other than being constituted 'in and of time'. One important implication of Hegel's work is that to understand time it is necessary to understand the social relations between things and people: to explore how time is socially constructed.

A second approach to understanding time can be described as the contrast between past and future. Bergmann (1992), for example, characterizes societies in terms of successive forms of societal organization such as traditional and modern or agrarian and industrial, to which could be added modern and late modern or industrial and post-industrial (see van Tienoven (2018) for an overview). Such categorizations refer to change over time and imply social forms with different temporal orientations. These orientations are sometimes applied to societies but can also be applied to particular social groups within a society, hence terms like progress, advanced, developed, entrepreneurial or even revolutionary being applied to generically describe societies or groups that are future-oriented, and terms such as conservative, orthodox, conventional and traditional to describe those with a past or present-orientation (Bergmann, 1992). In this approach, temporality is employed to capture and characterize successive (and broad) forms of societal change (from agrarian to industrial modes of socio-economic organization) and to characterize differences between socio-cultural groups.

Contrasting past and future temporalities presents societal change as a form of linear succession and continuum, which has come to dominate the conceptualizations of the future that underpin policy, innovations and government or business strategy. This is expressed in Luhmann's (1976: 139) argument that future time horizons are inseparable from the present: 'the future cannot begin but travels together with the present'. Predictions of the future (such as climate change or market demand) are almost always extrapolated from 'present' trends, while images of the future captured in films and literature are often based on the imagined maturation of specific aspects of present society (e.g. genetic engineering or robotic technologies) and present a future where the main focus is a critique of the present. Planning strategies, particularly with regards to technologies, focus on 'future presents' (Luhmann, 1976) where the future is often represented as 'technological advanced' versions of present forms of social life and the future is understood as the present located in a future temporal context. As contemporary debates about climate change demonstrate, the present threatens the future while the representation of how societies can respond to those threats are always rooted in our conceptualizations of the past and the present (Bergmann, 1992). One implication of this line of reasoning is that while the present is indeterminate of the future (Schatzki, 2010), imaginations or anticipations of the future act on the present because they shape our understandings and decisions about actions in the present.

Inter-cultural comparisons represent a third approach in which the temporal perspectives of different cultural groups are identified as a basis of fundamental societal difference. Evans-Pritchard's (1969) influential anthropological study of the Nuer, for example, showed how their understandings of time were represented through the changing seasons. Bourdieu's (1979) account of the Kabyle in Algeria

revealed hostility to any notion of 'clock time', which was referred to as the '*devil's mill*'. Reverence for the timings of nature dominated the way that the Kabyle organized time; '*submission to nature is inseparable from submission to the passage of time scanned in the rhythms of nature*' (ibid., 57). Hence, the Kabyle's philosophy was that a rainstorm, sunset, a harvest, or a child's rate of growth cannot be controlled, rushed or slowed down, they had no notion of designated times for meeting or set times for eating, and any sense of haste was regarded as '*a lack of decorum combined with a diabolical ambition*' (ibid., 57). Time diary studies represent another approach to comparing different cultures based on the organization and experience of time. For example, Warde et al. (2007) use time-diary data to show how the temporal organization of food consumption in different societies is representative of cultural variations in the social structure and stratification of the practice of eating. The temporalities of eating are symbolic of social status in France and the UK, but not in Norway, the Netherlands or USA. Such differences may partly be explained by Gershuny's (2000) analysis of time use in twenty OECD countries, which suggests that cultural variations in the use of time relate to differences in socio-political regimes (e.g. based on mixes of liberal market economics and socio-democratic welfare systems).

'Life-times' capture a fourth set of approaches often applied to the analysis of time, and includes considerations of the body, generation and life-course. The significance of 'life-times' cannot be described in any more profound sense than Heidegger's (1927) observation that human existence finds its meaning in its temporal character: that being human is made visible through the progressive movement towards death. Barbara Adam (1989; 1990) also highlights how biological and social times are inseparable. For instance, the ageing body is often at odds with the contemporary (cultural) celebration of youthful bodies. While our bodies reveal the 'biological times' of ageing, numerous technologies enable us to attempt to overcome that process; and it is here that biological and socially derived times meet. The physiology of the body is also temporally organized. We eat, sleep, breathe, use energy, digest, perceive, think, concentrate, communicate, interact and work in rhythmic ways that are tied to the functions of organs, tissues and hormones. Hence, we get tired, indigestion and feel out-of-sorts if we work through the night (Adam, 1995). The relationship between biological and social times is a source of many contemporary ethical debates, including the use of medical science to prolong the fertility age of women and the use of cosmetic surgery to overcome the process of ageing.

A second sense in which we can refer to lifetimes is through the timing of one's birth. Mannheim's (1952) concept of generation is significant here. Mannheim was concerned with the collective production and circulation of knowledge and the conditions under which different forms of knowledge flourished. He argued that generations, groups of people born around the same time and experiencing similar social conditions in their formative years, acquire similar forms of knowledge and thus interpret the world in similar ways. The collective cohesion of generations can be found on three levels. The first is the 'generational site'. People born in the same time-period experience events at the same phase in their biographical development and experience those events in a similar sequence. The second level is 'generational actuality', where those born in particular time-periods share collective interpretations of events and ideas. Third are 'generational units' which account for variations, largely based on more localized interpretations of the same sequence of events, within each generation site. Shared timing of birth and sequential experience of events presents collective groups:

'with a common location in the historical dimension of the social process... [which is important because]... participation in the same social and historical circumstances... [means that such groups]... coalesce into a natural view of the world... [and]... all later experiences then tend to receive their meaning from this original set, whether they appear as that set's verification or its negation and anti-thesis' (Mannheim, 1952: 291-8).

Mannheim's account is subject to strong critique, not least because it is difficult to draw boundaries around generational sites, actualities and units. However, it presents an important contribution to understanding the relationship between lifetimes, the relations between different social groups, and cultural understandings of the social world. In Mannheim's theory, lifetimes are critical to understanding how people relate to one another, and the forms of knowledge that bind them together or emphasizes their differences.

A further dimension of lifetimes is the life-course, which marks the different stages of life. Before the nineteenth century, the unpredictable length of any individual life meant that the idea of understanding age as a process of 'stages' lacked any substance, and numerical age had limited significance beyond broad categorizations of childhood. It was only once individuals lived predictably into old age that any standardized passage across the life-course could be conceived (Gillis, 1999). It was from the 1870s that stages of childhood, adulthood and eventual old age could be understood as 'stages of life'. As Cook (2000) details, between the nineteenth and twentieth century life stages really began to penetrate social life. He identified a range of processes: legislation around child labour; the establishment of educational and charitable institutions; the emergence of medical discourses surrounding physical and psychological development and decay; market segmentation strategies of retailers and manufacturers; and, the formation of the welfare state. Critically, when contrasted with Mannheim's concept of generation, time is relevant not in terms of when one is born but to the timings of biographical ages. Life-course amounts to the similarity of experience and knowledge of those who share the same stage of life; and lifetimes follow broadly predictable sequences of events and challenges. While debates have emerged regarding the sequential rigidity of life-stages (Hockey & James, 2003; Bauman, 1992) the point remains that lifetimes refer to a fundamental feature of the relationship between time and society.

The final set of approaches that conceptualize the relationship between time and society are those that focus on socio-temporal rhythms. At the core of these approaches is the premise that time in human societies is socially constructed. Durkheim (1915) described how the rhythms of social life are the very basis for the idea of time itself and that time is a thoroughly modern idea. For Durkheim the notion of time emerges from the regularity of events such as market day, holidays, and festivities such as Christmas and Easter – all of which can be thought of as events in the day, week, month, year that mark the temporal rhythms of society and our collective understandings of the passage of time: of past times, present times and future times. Elias (1992) formulated this as 'social time'; because time is understood and experienced through the intervals that derive from collective social activities and the comprehension of their appropriate 'timing' (Tabboni, 2001).

It is, however, Zerubavel's (1979, 1981, 1982) analysis of socio-temporal rhythms that represents the most systematic conceptual analysis of social time. He identifies four major dimensions of the temporal profile of any event or situation. First are *sequential structures*, which refer to the sequences in which events occur. Zerubavel points out that most events are sequenced following

culturally sanctioned conventions. Career structures, eating events, rituals (such as a wedding), even dating display distinct sequential structures and, in most cases, offer a guidance regarding the tempo through which events in the sequence 'should' flow, such as a new relationship can progress 'too fast' or 'too slow' depending on the cultural conventions of different societal contexts. The second dimension is *duration*, which is the length of time for which the event lasts. Again, cultural conventions shape the length of time that any event is expected to last. Zerubavel provides the example of entertainment events such as concerts, opera and cinema tending to have a duration of approximately two hours, and that people feel cheated when an event lasts for a shorter duration and restless if it 'drags on'. Leaving 'too early', doing something for too long (e.g. being engaged for too long), overstaying one's welcome represent examples of cultural conventions that regulate the durations and timings of an event. Third are *standard temporal locations*, which refer to the times when events typically occur within the context of a day, week, month, year, and so on. Eating times, working times, appropriate times to drink alcohol, to sleep, leisure times, times for worship or intimacy are all forms of institutionalized collective timings of events that represent shared understandings of the rhythms of society. The final dimension identified by Zerubavel is *rate of recurrence*, which refers to the frequency with which events occur. Everyday events recur on a 24-hour basis (e.g. eating, sleeping, news broadcasts and so on), or across the weekday and weekend (e.g. work and leisure). Other events occur on annual cycles (such as festivities and national holidays).

It is through these four dimensions that our understandings and lived experiences of time are formed and through which the temporal structures of social life are ordered and regulated. This is made possible through the intricate relationship between clocks, calendars, schedules and timetables, which come to represent and order events into rhythmic patterns. For Zerubavel, social time is rendered meaningful through the temporal ordering of collective social events and activities, and it is that ordering that reproduces and structures the organization of contemporary experiences of everyday life.

The five approaches to temporality presented in this section reflect the broad range of critical social scientific engagements with notions of time and how it relates to social life. Some attempts have been made to synthesize and weave together these different temporal perspectives into a coherent analytical framework, the most comprehensive being Adam's (1998) 'timescapes' perspective. Synthesis is not, however, the objective of the analysis in this book not least because each of the approaches seek to address quite different intellectual questions. As already discussed, the substantive entry point of this analysis is the time squeeze. Seeking to explain if contemporary lives are experiences of time scarcity (whether perceived or actual) and examine what processes of social change might have given rise to such experiences represents a critical first step of the analysis. The changing ways in which time is understood, including the rise of scientific measurement of action and motion is therefore an important part of the argument. So too is consideration of past–present–future societal forms and the temporal framings of succession or continuum between past and future, that are commonly employed to explain rates and processes of societal change. At various points throughout the book inter-cultural comparisons and differentiation between lifetimes (mostly related to age) will form part of the analytical discussion, and in most cases used to clarify that temporalities are organized and experienced in varying ways by different social groups. It is, however, with reference to the approach that I have described here as socio-temporal rhythms that this book is principally focused. This is because the core argument that will be developed in the following

chapters is that time does not exist outside, or independently from, the organization and performance of social practices.

1.3. Towards a social practice theory of the socio-temporal organization.

This book is broadly organized into three parts. The first charts the development of theories that explain the relationship between time and society by considering the rising centrality of clock time in modernity (chapter two), how the commodification of time in the context of an emerging consumer culture became synonymous with perceptions of time scarcity (chapter three), and accounts that diagnose the acceleration of everyday lives in late modernity (chapter four). The second section reviews empirical accounts of everyday temporal experiences, considering the ways in which people organize their time and the rhythms that are produced (chapter five), and contrasts that temporal organization with accounts of British everyday lives in the 1930s (chapter six). The final section sets out to explain the processes through which temporal rhythms are formed and reproduced (chapter seven) and to consider the implications of this analysis for contemporary concerns about everyday lives in which time (scarcity and pressure) is often mobilized as both a cause, and barrier to the resolution, of societal problems particularly related to well-being and sustainable consumption. The remainder of this section provides a summary of the book and its core arguments.

Chapter two focuses on the significance of clock time in framing understandings and explanations of time and social change. The rising centrality of clock time and its contribution to profound changes in the organization and experience of social life during modernity have led to the dominance of the clock for framing and understanding time in contemporary societies. Such framings present time as an objective unit (of minutes, hours etc...) that measures human activity as a matter of succession: activities start and end, follow a linear succession and have a before and after – all of which are codified through the objective units of clock time. And the clock, quite literally, comes to objectify time – time is represented and interpreted through the object of the clock with ‘time’ seen to pass independently from human activity. Framed in this way, a socio-historical account of time and society present the clock as a means of regulating, coordinating and synchronizing economic and social activity. Through these processes, clock time became a standardized mechanism for measuring activity, facilitating the attribution of scientific principles of time management to maximize economic efficiency and as a form of social discipline. Time, in this perspective, became commodified as a decontextualized resource to be valued, exchanged and negotiated. The post-war period of mass consumption signaled new ways in which clock time penetrated into our everyday lives. Time consciousness came to infuse our leisure and consumption practices, with leisure subject to forms of measurement and principles of efficiency, while the growing access to consumption for more members of society meant that people had more opportunities and choices to pursue consumption through expression of lifestyle. Both leisure and consumption became increasingly time consuming, while the means to facilitate both (i.e. disposable income) required that people worked more. As Juliet Schor (1992) has so neatly summarised, by the end of the twentieth century those living in affluent societies were locked into ‘work-spend’ cycles while those in less affluent societies aspired to this (consumer-lifestyle oriented) predicament.

Chapter three considers the evidence from time diary studies to examine in detail claims of the scarcity that results from working more to consume more. First, time spent in paid and unpaid work is examined across affluent societies with a focus on changes over time. While the data presents many important nuances, it shows little overall evidence of any systematic increase of time spent in paid and unpaid work. General convergence between men and women with respect to the amounts of time devoted to paid and unpaid work (men spending less time in the former and more in the latter, with a reverse trend for women) is revealed, although these trends do not convince of significant gender equity in time use. The more important insight from time diary data is that objective time is not the property of individuals but shared and managed across people, especially in the contexts of personal relationships. Couples distribute activities such as paid and unpaid work between each other, with flexible hours of working emerging as a means for seeking to achieve 'work-life balance' and for juggling the demands of paid and unpaid work. It is argued that these processes essentially extend the logic of objective and rationalized time to the organization and experience of personal life. As Arlie Hochschild (1997) argues, societal responses to the perception of time scarcity, such as flexible working, time-saving domestic technologies and the outsourcing of domestic activities such as childcare, has the effect of commodifying personal life. Relationships with intimate partners, children, family members and friends come to be judged through the quality of time made available to spend with them. These processes only serve to raise cultural standards of comfort, cleanliness and convenience (see Shove, 2003) and cultural expectations with respect to the 'qualities' of time that one makes available for those closest to them. The irony is that the main societal responses to perceptions of time scarcity essentially only serve to increase cultural expectations, standards and activities while rationalizing, intensifying and de-personalizing the qualities of our temporal experiences.

Chapter four turns attention to debates regarding time pressure that are associated with claims that social lives are an experience of acceleration. Many popular science books diagnose the chronic speeding up of more or less all aspects of social lives and do so largely through a focus on technological innovations. While such books seem to present the twenty-first century as something of a high point in the speeding up of societies, concern with processes of acceleration have been a notable feature of social theory since the nineteenth century. Innovations in travel and communications technologies, particularly the railway and telephony, expanded and accelerated the movement of people, the circulation of goods and the capacity to exchange information. The disorienting effects of speed combined with the new sensory experiences of urban living, in which the spectacle of urban spaces and the anonymity of the crowd offers new opportunities for individuation but in a context of indifference, underpinned modern experiences of constant flux and rapid change. Innovations in travel and information and communications technologies in the post-war period continued, leading David Harvey (1989) to describe a process of time-space compression as the globe effectively shrinks when represented in terms of the time it takes to traverse space whether in person or through communications. These processes of acceleration are captured and summarized in Rosa's (2017) theory of dynamic stabilization, in which the only stable feature of late-modern societies is their constant and rapid change. The rate of technological innovations constantly increases, the speed of change outstrips the pace at which social institutions (e.g. the family, occupational structures and forms of governance) can respond, and together everyday lives come to be experienced overwhelmingly as one of speed and time pressure.

While broad theoretical accounts of acceleration contain many interesting and persuasive arguments about the general perception of speed in contemporary societies, the empirical evidence to support claims that everyday lives are an experience of overwhelming time pressure remains inconclusive. Chapter four concludes by reviewing the empirical material, much of which is drawn from studies of science and technology and particularly the impacts of digital technologies. Such technologies afford new temporalities (described by Hassan (2003) as 'network time') and forms of instantaneous communications. These technologies offer scope for the intensification of activities in units of time (minutes or hours). However, the empirical evidence demonstrates that technologies such as mobile phones, emails and the internet are embedded in daily life in multiple ways that can be experienced in terms of acceleration and deceleration, of fast and slow, and as offering scope for micro-coordination and sense of greater control over personal activities alongside feelings of being overwhelmed by the sheer range of demands that compete for one's time (Wajcman, 2015). Recent time diary evidence also suggests that people in the UK actually feel less 'time pressed' in 2015 than they did in 2000, and that the types of fragmented episodes of activity that would be expected by theories of acceleration are simply not revealed in the data (Sullivan & Gershuny, 2018).

The theories explored in chapters two to four represent a wide range of interpretations and understandings of the relationship between time and social change, and about how people experience that relationship. At the core, however, remains a conceptualization of time that presents it as an objective and objectified unit. Clearly, this is one important way of analyzing temporalities and how they are experienced: clock time matters and remains fundamental to the ways in which human activities are organized. However, when pieced together with the empirical evidence, theories that conceptualize time in objective terms fail to convincingly explain why the notion of a time squeeze is so prevalent in descriptions of contemporary everyday lives. Applying a different empirical lens, one which explores how activities are allocated and scheduled in the context of a day or week, offers an alternative framework for examining how time is experienced in daily lives. It is this empirical lens that forms the focus of the second part of this book.

The first step in developing such an empirical approach is to consider the ways in which people experience time through the organisation of activities from which their daily lives are comprised. Chapter five reports on empirical studies that consider whether people feel time squeezed and if so, why they feel this is the case. The data revealed an overwhelming sense of feeling time squeezed, which respondents explained as a consequence of different examples of 'doing more'. However, first-hand experiences of the time squeeze in day-to-day lives revealed it to be a consequence of the challenge of coordinating everyday activities with others and synchronizing the timings of those activities. This challenge of coordination and synchronization led to everyday temporalities that were captured as experiences of 'hot spots' of intensive activities deemed necessary to create the possibility of (temporal) 'cold spots' reserved for meaningful practices with others (often referred to as quality time).

One difficulty with accounts of temporal experiences is the paucity of data that enables comparison with past lives. Analyzing 'day in the life' diaries from 1937 held in the Mass Observation Archive, chapter six explores the extent to which diarists described feelings of being time squeezed. The striking feature of the narratives provided by diarists was the absence of the challenges of coordination and synchronization that featured so strongly in the accounts of contemporary temporal

experiences. By contrast, past lives featured strong collective timings of daily activities that resulted from clearly defined institutionally timed events, particularly start and end times of work, mealtimes but also events such as Sunday lunch, Monday as wash day and market days. As a consequence, diarists expressed limited senses of discretion in the allocation of activities within the context of the days that they described nor did they report the need to coordinate activities with others. One explanation for this empirical finding is that flexibility in the timings of paid and unpaid work together with greater variety of options for leisure and consumption have facilitated increasing individualization of temporal experiences, reducing constraints to the allocation of activities in daily lives and undermining shared socio-temporal rhythms. This does not mean that contemporary lives lack temporal rhythms – indeed analysis reveals a temporal ordering of the day in which activities with fixed temporal locations in the day or week, and that required coordination with other participants determined the sequencing of all daily activities in ways that produced discernible temporal rhythms – but that those rhythms are less collectively binding with respect to the timings of activities. The weakening of collectively timed activities does, however, make the task of coordinating daily lives, especially in the context of activities that require the participation of others for their satisfactory performance, more challenging.

The final part of this book turns its attention to developing a theoretical framework for conceptualizing socio-temporal rhythms and explaining how they are formed and reproduced. It does so by introducing social practice theories and their application to the study of time, before considering the implications of such a theoretical perspective for understanding the types of societal problems outlined at the beginning of this chapter. In so doing, a distinct analytical shift is made. In the empirical studies examined in chapters five and six, the object of analysis was the ways in which activities were allocated within the context of a day or week and the challenges that people face in negotiating such allocations. In the chapters seven and eight, the object of analysis is social practices and the temporalities that can be identified through the ways in which shared practices and organised and performed. Switching the analytical lens from how activities are experienced in time to how practices are organised and the temporalities that emerge from practice performances, it is argued, offers a different perspective on the relationships between time and society.

Chapter seven begins this task by observing that much social scientific enquiry into phenomena such as collective timings, synchronization and coordination tend to describe them generically as forms of socio-temporal rhythm. Defined as shared social phenomena related to or of time (socio-temporal), theories of rhythms are reviewed to argue that rhythms take circular (recurrent) and linear (sequential) forms that can be observed in the aggregate patterning of the ‘times when’ (timing) shared social practices are performed across society. Such rhythms can also be observed at multiple scales, from the micro-level rhythms experienced by individuals and households through to the macro-level rhythms of peak hours in energy demand and rush hours. Informed by social practice theory, and illustrated through an empirical study of laundry practices, this chapter argues that socio-temporal rhythms form and reproduce through the organization and performance of social practices. While laundry no longer has the distinct collective timing reflected in accounts of diarists in 1930s Britain where ‘Monday was wash day’, it remains a practice with discernible circular (e.g. the timings of washing machine use and times when people report doing laundry activities) and linear (e.g. the sequential flow of laundry activities) rhythms. These temporal rhythms formed out of the

organization of laundry practices, which were shaped by shared cultural meanings, skills and competence and the materialities of the practice.

The concluding chapter summarises the core arguments by reviewing three themes that run throughout the preceding chapters: the dominance of the clock, commodification and acceleration in framing understandings of time; coordination and synchronization of everyday activities and the declining strength of collectively timed events; and, the formation and reproduction of socio-temporal rhythms through the organisation of practices. In doing so, chapter eight considers the contributions that this analysis has advanced to social scientific understandings of time and society. The first is its presentation of further evidence that understanding time necessitates examination of multiple temporalities (especially related to the duration, periodicity, tempo, sequence and synchronization of activities), which moves beyond the measurement of activity distributions in clock time. Second is to establish that consumption and temporalities are indivisible. Consumption does not simply take time (although, of course, this is an important aspect of it), but is also embedded within conventions related to when consumption should happen, with whom, with what degree of frequency, and at what appropriate pace. Third, and drawing parallels from critiques of the methodological individualism that underpins dominant theories of consumption and behavior change, the analysis of this book demonstrates that temporalities cannot be explained through recourse to the discretionary time allocation choices of individuals. Informed by this analysis, the chapter concludes by returning to contemporary societal problems, particularly sustainable consumption and well-being, in which the time squeeze is often presented as both a cause and a barrier to be overcome. Treating time as an objective variable to be intervened in – by substituting, extending, displacing or resisting the allocation of activities in (clock) time – through policy is argued to be a weak, potentially flawed, response to the capacity of ‘temporal thinking’ for providing solutions to social problems. Rather, focus on the organization of practices and the socio-temporal rhythms that they shape offers alternative options for addressing major societal issues. Such an approach would place emphasis on the temporal alignment of practices and re-institution of collectively timed events, offering scope to alleviate the cognitive load of micro-coordinating activities in daily life and to foster new forms of collective consumption.